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SUBJECT: WEST NUSA TENGGARA: LIFE FOR LOMBOK'S AHMADIYAH SECT CHANGES
LITTLE FOLLOWING MINISTERIAL EDICT

REF: A. A JAKARTA 1459 (FEW REPORTS OF PRESSURE AFTER EDICT)
[1](#)B. SURABAYA 68 (AHMADIYAH SEEKS POLITICAL ASYLUM IN BALI)
[1](#)C. 07 SURABAYA 42 (LOMBOK'S AHMADIYAH)

SURABAYA 00000119 001.2 OF 002

This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: During an October 16 visit by Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF) representative and Surabaya Pol/Econ Officer to Mataram, Ahmadiyah refugees described their difficult living conditions and frustrations trying to generate government action to improve their situation. Despite a June 9 Joint Ministerial Edict (SKB) against the sect (Ref A), little has changed in their daily lives. The election of a new governor -- a respected Islamic teacher -- has not had much impact on the Ahmadi's plight. The local government has yet to provide basic services or permission to return home. The SKB appears to have reinforced the local government's inclination to view resolving the plight of the Ahmadis as a central government responsibility. Press coverage of the visit was generally factual, but noted the potential for future asylum requests. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On October 16, Surabaya Pol/Econ Officer, Pol/Econ Assistant and IRF's Clarissa Adamson visited the Ahmadiyah camp at Transito, in the city of Mataram, the provincial capital of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), on Lombok island. Currently 138 Ahmadiyah followers are living in the Transito camp -- an urban dormitory used for internal migrants. Another 57 people are staying in the nearby Praya Camp. Twenty people moved to Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, two months ago. In Lombok most Ahmadis work in the agriculture and informal sectors as traders, street vendors, domestic helpers, etc. The Transito refugees have been informed by the local government that limited food subsidies will end in December 2008.

Still Waiting for Guidance

[1](#)3. (SBU) Local or provincial governments have yet to produce written guidance for public officials in the wake of the SKB

regarding Ahmadiyah followers in Transito camp. The community's leaders told us that the refugees cannot return to their home village as at least three local officials (the regent of West Lombok, the head of the Lingsar district, and the head of Gegerungan Village) insist that they will not be safe there. The Ahmadis observed that the SKB has increased the existing tendency of the local government to ignore their plight and shift responsibility to the central government.

¶4. (SBU) The Ahmadis complained that few people seemed to understand that the joint edict did not outlaw Ahmadiyah; it simply prohibited Ahmadiyah from proselytizing. If given a guarantee of physical security and allowed to return to their home villages in Lombok, Ahmadiyah leaders in Transito said they would gladly return home without additional assistance from the government. According to the Transito Ahmadis, the government still refused to issue National ID cards, which are central to every Indonesian's access to social and political benefits. Ahmadis have also been denied welfare cards, which would allow them to collect benefits as refugees. Officials reportedly tell them that the absence of a fixed address prevents them from getting identity cards and letters confirming that they are destitute refugees. Transito Ahmadi's told us they suspect the real reason is because they are Ahmadiyah followers.

Positive Local Developments

¶5. (SBU) While the SKB has cast a shadow over the future of the Transito Ahmadiyah community, its followers claim good relations with local people and even some local officials. One local official from the provincial Religious Affairs Department

SURABAYA 00000119 002.2 OF 002

recently officiated at two Ahmadiyah marriage ceremonies at Transito. The officials attended the ceremony, recorded the marriages, and issued marriage certificates. In the past, the provincial government issued certificates without sending representatives. Two months ago, Ahmadiyah sent a letter to the newly elected governor requesting a meeting specifically to discuss their legal and social status, but have yet to receive a response. The Ahmadis noted that the new governor has distant relations within the community and has not criticized Ahmadiyah publicly.

Press Coverage

¶6. (U) The USG visit to Transito was covered by the local newspaper Lombok Pos and its parent Jawa Pos on October 18. A generally factual report stated that the U.S. Consulate representatives were interested in understanding the living conditions of the refugees. The article noted complaints by the refugees about conditions in the camp and stated that the refugees were interested in asylum in the U.S. should they no longer be accepted by their own country. TVOne television news also broadcast a report on the visit nationally.
MCCLELLAND